

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8193

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION GENEVA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1975

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SOCI, CI

SUBJECT: CARDINAL REPORTS THREAT ON LIFE AND CRITICIZES GOC ON

HUMAN RIGHTS IN EASTER MESSAGE

REF: SANTIAGO 1743 (NOTAL)

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: ARCHBISHOP OF SANTIAGO RAUL CARDINAL SILVA
IN EASTER SERMON APRIL 13 ANNOUNCED THAT HIS LIFE HAD BEEN
THREATENED AND THAT HE NOW HAS POLICE ESCORT. NEWS WAS WORKED
INTO MESSAGE IN WHICH HE TOUCHED ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, AS
MEANS OF ILLUSTRATING EXTREMES TO WHICH HATRED HAS BROUGHT PEOPLE
OF CHILE. END SUMMARY

2. ANNOUNCEMENT BY CARDINAL GIVEN MAJOR PRESS AND MEDIA PLAY.
GOC SPOKESMAN CONFIRMED THAT INTELLIGENCE SERVICES LEARNED
APRIL 11 OF LEFTIST THREAT TO LIFE OF CARDINAL AND HAD WARNED HIM.
BY ORDER OF GENERAL PINOCHET POLICE ESCORT ASSIGNED TO PROTECT
CARDINAL. NEWSPAPER LA TERCERA QUOTED "WELL-INFORMED SOURCES"
AS STATING THREAT COMES FROM FOLLOWERS OF EX-SOCIALIST SENATOR
CARLOS ALTAMIRANO, WHO DESCRIBED AS HAVING ISSUED CONSTANT
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THREATS AGAINST CARDINAL FROM REFUGE IN CUBA.

3. EASTER MESSAGE ITSELF WAS APPEAL FOR BROTHERLY LOVE, WITH HATRED AND DIVISION DEPLORED. CARDINAL ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER CHRISTIAN LOVE AND PRINCIPLES RULED IN CHILE, AND ANSWERED SELF WITH EXPRESSION OF DOUBT AND APPREHENSION. IN MOST POINTED REFERENCES, HE STATED THAT CHURCH HAD ASKED BOTH PEOPLE AND "AUTHORITIES," IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY, TO RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS, BUT "THEY HAVE NOT HEARD US." MESSAGE CLOSED WITH CALL FOR UNDERSTANDING, CONSOLATION OF AFFLICTED, AND "GRANTING OF LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES." END UNCLASSIFIED

4. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: JESUIT FATHER FERNANDO SALAS, EXEC DIRECTOR COMMITTEE FOR COOPERATION FOR PEACE, CHILEAN INTER-DENOMINATIONAL RELIGIOUS GROUP, WHO IS CLOSE TO CARDINAL, TOLD EMBOFF APRIL 15 THAT ALL CARDINAL KNOWS OF ALLEGED THREAT IS WHAT

HE HAS BEEN TOLD BYSSINISTRY INTERIOR. SALAS CAREFULLY AVOIDED ANSWERING QUESTION OF DEGREE OF CARDINAL'S BELIEF IN STORY. FATHER SALAS ALSO SAID THAT CAREFULLY-WORDED CRITICISM OF GOC IN CARDINAL'S EASTER MESSAGE WAS AS FAR AS CARDINAL HAS GONE IN PUBLIC, BUT STILL MUCH MORE MUTED THAN DESIRED BY SOME IN CHURCH.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH EMBASSY HAS NO OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT ALLEGED LEFTIST THREAT AGAINST CARDINAL, IT APPEARS ILLOGICAL ON FACE. CARDINAL SILVA'S UNHAPPINESS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD OF JUNTA IS REASONABLY WELL KNOWN, AND ANY PHYSICAL ATTACK ON HIM WOULD BOTH DEPRIVE LEFTIST OPPONENTS OF REGIME OF HIS POTENTIAL INFLUENCE IN MODERATING JUNTA POLICIES AND ALIENATE GREAT MAJORITY OF CHILEANS. GOC MAY HAVE FABRICATED STORY TO COUNTER CARDINAL'S CRITICISMS OF ITS HARD LINE ON LEFTISTS. IN ADDITION, POLICE ESCORT AROUND CARDINAL WOULD PRESUMABLY BOTH DEPRIVE HIM OF PRIVACY AND SERVE TO SOME DEGREE AS AN ELEMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INTIMIDATION. POSSIBLY IN RESPONSE TO THIS PRESSURE, CARDINAL ANSWERED OWN ANNOUNCEMENT OF REPORTED THREAT AGAINST HIM BY STATING FOUR TIMES IN QUICK SUCCESSION: "I CANNOT BELIEVE IT." THIS COULD BE SIMPLE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO EVIDENCE OF LACK OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUE IN CHILE, BUT ALSO COULD BE HIS EVALUATION OF GOC WARNING.

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